



# ALABAMA HILLS • MOVIE FLAT

BIZARRELY-SHAPED BOULDERS AND PINNACLES OF STONE; BEHIND THEM THE SNOW-CAPPED PEAKS OF THE HIGH SIERRA — NO WONDER THE ALABAMA HILLS HAVE BEEN THE SETTING FOR HUNDREDS OF FILMS — DEPICTING DESERTS OF THE OLD WEST, THE FAR EAST, AND EVEN DISTANT GALAXIES!

**What to expect:** Although it begins on pavement, most of this route is on a well-maintained graded dirt road that is usually accessible year-round.

**Length:** 12.1 miles.

**Driving time:** about 1 hour, one way.

**Getting there:** From Lone Pine start at the traffic light in the center of town and turn west, toward the Sierra, onto Whitney Portal Road. The route starts here at the intersection—set your trip meter to zero.

**Along the route:** About half a mile out of Lone Pine you'll cross the Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in 1913 to supply water to the incorporated City of Los Angeles. The solitary pine tree growing along the creek above the aqueduct is close to the location of the original lone pine that gave the creek and the town their name. The original tree blew down in a wind storm in 1882.

Near the pine are an information kiosk and entrance sign for the Alabama Hills Recreation Lands. The mining district in these hills was named by Confederate sympathizers in honor of the Confederate raider ship *Alabama*, which sank over 50 Union ships in its 22-month existence.

The weird, picturesque rock formations of the Alabama Hills are granite eroded by water into rounded shapes. The majestic High Sierra backdrop is also eroded by water, but in the form of ice, which carves and cracks granite into jagged crags. Which one is Mount Whitney, highest peak in the contiguous 48 states? The cover of this guide shows it in the center. It appears lower than neighboring peaks because it stands farther back.

At 2.7 miles, at the white historical marker, take a right turn off the paved road onto Movie Road. It all began in 1920 when Fatty Arbuckle came here to film *The Round Up* for Paramount. Since then, more than 300 feature films have been shot

in the Alabama Hills, along with dozens of TV shows, movie serials and car commercials. Go to the right of the marker onto the graded dirt road, which soon becomes rough pavement and then dirt again. You'll be driving through Movie Flat, the location for many Western movies with stars including John Wayne, Tom Mix, Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers.

At 3.8 miles pull over, get out and look west toward the Sierra and back to the south to see the exact Roy Rogers location shown in the photo! If you're a movie buff, plan on coming back for the Lone Pine Film Festival held here each October, when still photos from many motion pictures are set up on location.

At 4.2 miles turn right and continue to follow the main, graded road. At 5.4 miles, just past the crest of the hill, is where John Wayne made his last appearance before the camera in a 1978 commercial.

At 7.9 miles make a right turn onto a road that is also graded but a little more narrow and rough. This is Moffat Ranch Road, but there may be no sign at this intersection. Moffat Ranch was the site of the Salt Lake City set for the movie *Brigham Young*.

At 8.3 miles take a left, then immediately another left.

At 9.2 miles go right to follow along Hogback Creek—a good place to see and hear songbirds in the spring and early summer. As you descend to the valley floor you'll cross a cattle guard; take a right and go over the aqueduct again to return to U.S. 395.



Filming Roy Rogers' first starring feature, *Under Western Stars*, along Movie Road in the Alabama Hills  
COURTESY LONE PINE FILM FESTIVAL

